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### European Cosmopolitanism in Question [book review]

Hiro SAITO

Singapore Management University, [hirosaito@smu.edu.sg](mailto:hirosaito@smu.edu.sg)

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**European Cosmopolitanism in Question, edited by Roland Robertson and Anne Sophie Krossa. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 204pp. \$28.00 paper. ISBN: 9780230302631.**

HIRO SAITO, University of Hawaii at Manoa, email: hs9@hawaii.edu

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European Cosmopolitanism in Question offers a critical and timely intervention in the emerging research on cosmopolitanism. Specifically, contributors to the volume collectively explore solutions to two major problems in the sociology of cosmopolitanism proposed by Ulrich Beck, arguably the most influential scholar in the field.

The first major problem in the sociology of cosmopolitanism is its Eurocentric bias. Beck and his colleagues tend to present cosmopolitanism as having a special relationship with Europe on historical, cultural, and political dimensions. Historically, Immanuel Kant, who wrote the famous treatise on world peace and inspired the philosophy of cosmopolitanism, was European. Today, the European Union embodies cosmopolitanism by transforming former antagonists into cooperative neighbors as well as by upholding multilateralism as its diplomatic principle, in contrast with the unilateral and nationalistic United States. These are but two common examples of Eurocentrism in the sociology of cosmopolitanism.

Chapters in the book effectively deconstruct this Eurocentrism on three grounds. First, several contributors point out that cosmopolitanism as a philosophical thought emerged during the Age of Enlightenment through Europe's imperial, and often violent, encounters with the rest of the world: the birth of cosmopolitanism did not belong to Europe in itself but to the larger field of communications, interactions, and conflicts encompassing both Europe and other regions. Second, cosmopolitanism, defined as openness to the foreign other within the horizon of common humanity, is not uniquely European. A variety of religious doctrines and cultural practices outside of Europe have long exhibited characteristics that qualify as cosmopolitan, and indeed produced individuals with cosmopolitan biographies and orientations. Finally, the idea of cosmopolitanism is now part and parcel of what sociologists call "world polity." Due to the progressive institutionalization of world polity since the end of World War II, people and governments around the world, not just in Europe, have become familiar with cosmopolitanism articulated in a human-rights discourse.

I agree that Europe and cosmopolitanism have no intrinsic connection when the two are placed within a global frame of reference (which Roland Robertson calls "global field"). However, I wonder whether the real value of the book lies in this act of putting "European cosmopolitanism in question," especially when the book is intended to open up the sociology of cosmopolitanism beyond the borders of Europe by encouraging research on non-European cosmopolitanisms and by inviting non-European sociologists into this new field of study. American sociologists who engage with literatures on world polity and transnational social movements, for example, have already been studying "cosmopolitanism," even though they do not use the word. More importantly, younger generations of sociologists outside of Europe, who grew up when a human-rights discourse was becoming part of their everyday life, may not fully comprehend the significance of deconstructing Eurocentrism because they are likely to see the idea of cosmopolitanism as universal to people around the world, to begin with, and have never thought of cosmopolitanism as uniquely European. Thus, the book's aim to deconstruct Eurocentrism may not resonate with non-European sociologists as much as with their European colleagues.

Instead, the real value of the book lies in its attempt to resolve the second major problem in the sociology of cosmopolitanism: a failure to articulate cosmopolitanism as an object of sociological study. Any sociologists, irrespective of their nationalities, can immediately recognize the significance of this problem. To reconstruct the concept of cosmopolitanism for the purpose of rigorous sociological analysis, contributors critically review existing studies and express cosmopolitanism as the openness to the foreign other within the horizon of common humanity. Then, they examine cosmopolitanism both as a normative claim that individuals, organizations, and institutions invoke, and as an empirical tendency that they embody. Contributors who examine the normative dimension of cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, argue that it is crucial for advocates of cosmopolitanism in Europe and elsewhere to be aware of the limits of universalist claims (e.g., “common humanity”) that they invoke. Those who examine the empirical dimension of cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, use cross-national survey data and transnational biographies to explore the existence of cosmopolitanism, operationalized as an open attitude to the foreign other, in Europe and other parts of the world.

But chapters in the book do not fully follow through in their attempt to inject conceptual and empirical rigor into the sociology of cosmopolitanism. When some of the contributors call for reflexive awareness of the limits of universalist claims in cosmopolitanism, for example, it is unclear what their arguments add to the existing debate over the politics of recognition or the hegemonic struggle for universality. It is also unclear how the book can help the sociology of cosmopolitanism increase its empirical rigor when only two of the nine chapters offer empirical, albeit preliminary, analysis of cosmopolitanism based on systematically collected data. Thus, the book recapitulates the current state of the sociology of cosmopolitanism, illustrating how much more needs to be done before the field can routinely produce rigorous research.

Nonetheless, the book suggests one novel, potentially groundbreaking approach to cosmopolitanism by referring to the debate over Muslim immigrants in Europe and Turkey’s accession to the European Union: to study empirically how normatively-oriented claims and actions by advocates of cosmopolitanism may restructure existing situations and institutions to become more cosmopolitan. The opposite causal pathway (e.g., how institutions, such as class structures, influence the likelihood of the person’s claim to cosmopolitanism) has been examined earlier by some of the contributors as well as by other main figures in the sociology of cosmopolitanism. Yet, there is little research on how people on the ground draw on cosmopolitanism as a claim and/or as a disposition in trying to intervene in situations and institutions pertaining to the foreign other.

This question of “ordinary cosmopolitans” and their politics, intimated by several contributors, moves the research on cosmopolitanism toward the pragmatic sociology of critique and emancipation. Such a move can not only make the sociology of cosmopolitanism empirically more rigorous by demanding researchers to follow closely the cosmopolitan discourses and actions actually practiced by people on the ground. It can also make sociologists of cosmopolitanism more self-reflexive—to examine their role in ongoing political struggles over a wide variety of problems and possibilities created by globalization. This pragmatic move therefore has the potential to help sociologists study normative and empirical dimensions of cosmopolitanism (as well as their relations) with greater conceptual and empirical rigor while avoiding the analytically debilitating conflation of the two often found in Beck’s writings.

Despite its limitations, this book is a must-read for sociologists interested in cosmopolitanism. Especially those who found existing studies in the sociology of cosmopolitanism unsatisfactory will appreciate critical perspectives and insightful suggestions offered by Robertson, Anne Krossa, and other contributors to the volume. In essence, this book is an invitation to take cosmopolitanism seriously and reconstruct it as an object of rigorous sociological analysis. By accepting the invitation, readers can help the emerging research on cosmopolitanism transcend the borders of Europe and become a truly cosmopolitan endeavor.